Technology-Mediated Writing Tasks in the Online English Classroom: Focus on Form via Synchronous Videoconferencing

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Abstract

Italy was the first country in the European Union to adopt a nationwide lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and students and teachers were significantly affected. This chapter reports on a case study in an Italian secondary school that explores the use of technology-mediated language tasks to develop second language (L2) competence using the past simple tense in an English language class which took place online using the Google Meet video conferencing tool. The participants were 24 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students from a lower secondary school in Milan who completed a module on narrative tenses during six one-hour lessons. The study aimed to measure the impact on student's learning of an explicit focus on form at the pre-task stage and followed a mixed-methods approach. Both pre- and post-test data were collected alongside students' perceptions of technology-mediated language writing tasks via an online questionnaire that learners completed at the end of the module. Findings suggest that learners reached the expected linguistic goals in the use of narrative tenses and students also reported a perceived improvement in their language competence, showing positive attitudes towards the task type and modality. This study sheds light on the use of focus on form activities at the pre-task stage and contributes to research on how technology-mediated task-based learning can be undertaken in a challenging online EFL school context.

1. Introduction

While the COVID-19 emergency occurred at a moment when digital tools had already been playing a key role in second language education, both within and outside of formal contexts, the pivot to

remote online during 2020 teaching identified the need for more research on how secondary schools were adjusting to their new online world. Education in Italy was significantly affected during the pandemic, and it became the first European country to enter a period of sustained lockdown lasting for several months. As we examine more closely how the pandemic has impacted on the way we teach, communicate, and relate to students in the language classroom, a few aspects in particular stand out and warrant further reflection in the context of research on computer-assisted language learning (CALL). First, what are the implications of the widespread use of video conferencing tools and the consequent move from the classroom into a personal workspace. Secondly, how can we understand the complete sense of responsibility that students of any age now bear for their engagement in lessons, whether they are actively involved in a digital task or easily distracted behind a screen. Finally, the urgency which accompanied the move online forced some language educators to translate face-to-face tasks into the digital environment without fully understanding the potential risks and affordances of digital pedagogy, and this has not always had the positive impact that the rhetoric surrounding the integration of digital technologies would like to portray. All of these aspects have contributed to building a new virtual form of language teaching in which the integration of tasks and technology is no longer simply advocated but has become a firm expectation, if not an expectation and requirement. Whether the education strategies employed during the COVID-19 pandemic to date will remain in use in the future is difficult to predict in a constantly shifting digital landscape, but there are, without a doubt, lessons language educators need to reflect on and build on for the future, particularly in the school sector.

Over the last 20 years, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has attracted an increasing amount of research from the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and second language acquisition (SLA) (Ellis et al., 2019; Hubbard & Levy, 2016; Thomas & Reinders, 2012) as it offers mutual opportunities to both fields. However, there are still concerns about the efficacy of

this approach in second and foreign language learning. One of the main concerns about TBLT is that there is no explicit focus on grammatical rules, and this could negatively impact students' language learning (Sato, 2010). In fact, even if there is no explicit focus on form, TBLT enables attention to form through implicit meaning-related activities (Ellis, 2009; Long, 2015).

In the TBLT cycle outlined by Willis (1996), for example, students follow three steps: they complete pre-task activities; they then perform the main task; and finally close the cycle with some (optional) post-task activities. Various strategies have been used to draw attention to form at the pre-task stage. In particular, researchers have focused on modelling (Van de Guchte et al., 2019), planning (Ziegler, 2018), and visual input modification (Lee & Huang, 2008). This chapter reports preliminary results on the effects of pre-task modelling and planning on students' learning of narrative tenses (the past simple and past continuous) through a study that was also designed to respond to EFL teachers' concerns about not teaching grammar rules explicitly, especially via distance learning. Although coursebooks are designed to follow a communicative approach, most secondary EFL teachers in Italy prefer to teach grammar rules during the pre-task phase. The main aims of this study were a) to investigate whether explicit attention on form at the pre-task stage would lead to a more accurate use of the narrative tenses being taught, and b) to explore the implications for secondary school teachers and learners of attempting this type of approach online.

2. Literature review

2.1 Explicit focus on form in the pre-task

The choice of task type and the conditions under which it is performed are not neutral. As the tasks will have an impact on students' language proficiency in terms of accuracy, fluency and/or complexity (Skehan, 2003), they should be carefully selected by the teacher. In this respect, pre-task activities play a key role in drawing attention to target language features and encouraging learners' engagement with the content of the task (van de Guchte et al., 2016). The question of

whether explicit grammar teaching in the pre-task is useful has proved quite controversial in previous research studies of the topic. Some researchers support the idea that an explicit focus on form can lead to improved accuracy, especially in EFL contexts (Littlewood, 2007).

On the other hand, other researchers (see for example Ellis, 2016) have demonstrated how a focus on grammar at the pre-task stage risks directing the student's attention to form, negatively affecting the communicative purpose of the task i.e. students are more focused on producing accurate language than on fluency and meaning making. However, an explicit focus on form in the pre-task may lead to more frequent use of the target feature in the task performance and even in the post-task stage (Ellis et al., 2019). In line with this view, the study examined in this chapter incorporates explicit grammar instructions in the pre-task and compares the effects on EFL learners' accurate use of language with and without grammar instructions.

2.2 Planning

Several studies have investigated changes in planning at the pre-task and the effects on students' language learning (Foster & Skehan, 1999; Ortega, 1999). Planning is a key component of the pre-task stage and researchers have largely investigated its potential. Both guided and unguided planning have resulted in improved performance of oral tasks, demonstrating positive results leading to improved fluency. Research also shows positive effects on complexity. However, the results demonstrating the effects of pre-task planning on accuracy are mixed. Some studies have observed that different planning conditions produce no specific effect on accuracy. Foster and Skehan (1996, 1999), for instance, investigated the impact of guided and unguided pre-task planning on a subsequent oral task (1996). Results revealed that students from the guided group (the detailed group, as defined by the authors) produced more complex utterances, but no significant difference was found in terms of accuracy. A further study by Foster and Skehan (1999) conducted with L2 learners produced similar results: students were exposed to different sources

of planning (teacher-led, individual and group planning) with each planning group focused on different aspects (language vs content). As expected, results showed different effects based on the source of planning, but not as a result of the focus-on-language vs focus-on-content distinction.

On the other hand, more recent studies have shown pre-task planning to have a positive influence on accuracy (Ellis, 2009b, 2016; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008). In his review of the impact of pre-task planning on fluency, complexity and accuracy, Ellis (2009) demonstrated that 13 out of 19 studies included in the review reported a positive effect on accuracy. For example, Motchizuki and Ortega (2008) conducted a study with 56 secondary school EFL students in Japan to investigate whether pre-task guided planning conditions with a focus on grammar (relative clauses) would impact learners' fluency, complexity and accuracy in the performance of an oral storytelling task. Students were assigned to different conditions (guided planning, unguided planning and no planning). Results showed that pre-task guided planning promoted a more accurate use of relativization compared to the other two groups. Thus, the findings of the study confirmed that beginner level L2 students may need additional grammar resources during planning time to achieve language goals.

Van de Guchte, Rijlaarsdam, Braaksma, and Bimmel (2016) examined the effects of pre-task modelling on learners' task performance. As in Mochizuki and Ortega (2008), the pre-task planning had a specific focus on form (locative prepositions), in particular aiming to measure the effects on accuracy and complexity of two different foci (focus on language vs focus on content) at the pre-task stage. Forty-eight secondary school students of German as a foreign language participated in the study. They were randomly assigned to two different planning conditions (focus on language or focus on content). As part of the guided planning time, all students completed a modelling task. The aim of the modelling video was to provide learners with an example of how to perform the main task. Results showed that pre-task planning had an influence on students' oral task

performance. In particular, in the immediate post-test activity, students in the focus-on-language group outperformed students in the focus-on-content group in the accurate use of the target structure, using it more often and more accurately. However, when the post-test was delayed, no significant difference was found. A possible explanation for this is that the focus-on-language group did not receive explicit focus on form instructions and grammar explanations, which probably impacted long-term acquisition processes. Ellis, Li and Zhou's (2019) experimental study involving 72 eighth grade EFL learners, also examined the impact of pre-task explicit instruction in relation to an oral focused task. Two groups, an explicit instruction task group which received a short grammar lesson followed by practice activities, and the task-only group, which completed the same task without pre-instruction, completed two oral dictogloss tasks enabling learners to produce past passives. Findings indicated that the explicit instruction group produced more frequent but less accurate and complex target language and calls into question the efficacy of focusing on linguistic form prior to task performance. Kim's (2012) experimental research explored pre-task modelling as a type of planning strategy in relation to Korean junior high school students' attention to question structures. Two groups, a pre-task modelling group and a no modelling group, completed a pre-test involving 3 tasks in dyads as well as two posttests during a period of 5 weeks. The modelling group undertook guided planning by watching pre-task videos, whereas the other group did not, and data were collected from students via think-aloud protocols and analyzed based on language-related episodes. Findings suggested that students from the pre-task modelling group had positive implications for focus on form and learners' question development.

2.3 Planning in technology-mediated writing tasks

So far, research on pre-task planning and focus on form has focused mainly on oral narrative tasks. Very few studies have been conducted on the effect of pre-task planning on L2 written performance (Ellis & Yuan, 2004). Additionally, as far as we know, only one study has investigated

the role of planning on written production in computer-mediated contexts (Adams et al., 2014).

Ellis and Yuan (2014)'s study examined different types of planning and their effects on fluency, complexity and accuracy. In particular, they investigated whether 42 EFL undergraduate learners produced more accurate and complex texts with pre-task planning or careful online planning activities. Similar to the study presented here, students were asked to write a narrative based on a set of related pictures. The three planning conditions were: no planning, pre-task planning and online planning. Participants in the online planning group had no pre-task planning time but did have unlimited online planning time. Participants in the pre-task planning group had 10 minutes to plan before the task and limited online planning time (75 minutes). There was no explicit focus on form in the pre-task and planning. Results showed that learners in the online planning group, who were unpressured by time constraints, produced more accurate texts than the pre-task planning group. However, the pre-task planning group outperformed the other groups in syntactic variety and fluency.

The study conducted by Adams et al. (2014) investigated planning in task-based computer-mediated writing with 45 EFL learners at a university in Malaysia. Participants were assigned to different experimental conditions (planning, online planning and no planning) and had to work on an English for specific purposes (ESP) task, which was to write a wiki page on an engineering project. Accuracy measures revealed that students in the unlimited online planning group produced more accurate language compared to the other groups, confirming the results of Ellis and Yuan (2004).

Based on this review, technology offers opportunities to design and implement various types of writing task, whether synchronous or asynchronous, and could facilitate second language acquisition processes. Further studies are needed to understand what type of language learning

tasks could offer opportunities to the development of writing skills both in formal and informal contexts.

3. Methodology

3.1 Context of the Study

This study was designed to investigate the effects of modelling and guided planning with an explicit focus on form (narrative tenses) in a pre-task activity in an online teaching context. Students were asked to perform a subsequent writing task similar to the one presented in the pre-task (a crime story). The independent variable being considered was planning under two different conditions: 10 minutes of unguided planning (with no grammar focus) and guided planning (with an explicit focus on grammar). The correct use of the target structures - the past simple and past continuous – constituted accuracy in this context. In addition to the integration of both complexity and accuracy from previous research, and similar to Van de Guchte et al. (2017), this study also featured the concept of modelling. As part of their planning time learners read and listened to a crime story similar to the one they were asked to produce in the main task. One group focused on the use of narrative tenses in the story (the guided planning group), while the others did not have a specific focus (unguided planning). The study investigated the following research questions:

1) How do modelling and planning with and without an explicit focus on form impact learners' knowledge of a specific language feature?

2) What are students' attitudes toward technology-mediated writing tasks?

Based on the positive results of previous studies, it was hypothesized that the guided planning group would outperform the unguided planning group in the post-test as they had been guided towards the noticing and use of target language features in the pre-task activity. Additionally, we hypothesized that learners would not perceive any significant differences in planning and

performing their task in a technology-mediated environment as their focus would be mainly on the task rather than on the technology used.

3.2 Participants

The participants in the study were 24 thirteen and fourteen year-old EFL learners (at the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages; CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001) from a lower secondary state school in Italy. There were 13 girls and 11 boys. Most of the students were Italian L1 speakers, 2 students had a Chinese language background and 2 were bilingual (Italian/Spanish). The teacher and researcher assigned them to two different groups: a guided planning group (n=12) and an unguided planning group (n=12). To ensure balance between the two groups, students were assigned to their group based on their results in the Oxford placement test which they had taken at the beginning of the school year. In the Italian secondary school curriculum, students have three hours of English lessons per week.

Due to the COVID-19 health emergency, all lessons took place remotely using the Google for Education workspace, namely Google Classroom. The platform included a bundle of applications that students could use synchronously during the lessons such as a word processor (Google Docs), a video conferencing tool (Google Meet), and a presentation tool (Google Presentation).

3.3 Research design and procedure

This study followed a pre- and post-test research design carried out over a period of six weeks (see Table 1). Qualitative evidence was also collected through student questionnaires. Learners took a pre-test on the use of the target structure (the past simple and past continuous) one week prior to the beginning of the study, and the same test was administered one week after the experiment had finished (post-test). The two-phase pre-task on the crime story (modelling and planning) was carried out under two conditions: guided and unguided planning.

Table 1. Research design

Timing	Stage	
Phase 1	Pre-test	Cloze grammar test on a crime story
Phase 2	Pre-task (Modelling)	2 Task conditions: guided and unguided planning
Phase 3	Pre-task (Planning)	2 Task conditions: guided and unguided planning
Phase 4	Main task (Story writing)	Writing task performance
Phase 5	Post-test	Cloze grammar test on a crime story
One week later	Qualitative data collection	Questionnaire on attitudes and perceptions

3.3.1 The crime story modelling task

The main task involved a crime story writing task. This type of task was chosen as it could be used to focus learners' attention on the target grammatical structures (the past simple and past continuous), and also because learners were familiar with this type of story as they were working on the same genre in their Italian literature lessons. As a pre-task, all participants read and listened to a picture-based crime story taken from their digital course book (Bowen & Delaney, 2019). The story was 1,943 words long and featured multimodal inputs including pictures, sounds and an actor narrator and this helped to keep students motivated. The language used in the story was positioned at the A2 level of the CEFR and included the use of coordinate and subordinate clauses, time expressions relating to the past simple and past continuous tenses (e.g., when, while, then etc.) and key vocabulary relating to crime and mystery (e.g., kill, murder, knife etc). Learners in the guided planning group were instructed to focus on the use of the verbs in the past simple and past continuous forms. A brief description of the grammar rules was also provided on an observation sheet. Students were required to produce 10 written examples of the use of the

past simple and past continuous from the story. The teacher shared the digital handout with instructions via Google Classroom and was able to read students' answers synchronously. Students from the unguided planning group received no instructions on language but were informed that they could take notes while reading and listening to the story. At the end of the story, students were given five minutes for general comprehension questions before they were required to submit their notes to the teacher. Overall, the duration of the pre-task modelling phase was about one hour. Before reading and listening to the story, all participants were informed that they were going to rewrite the crime story as their main task.

3.3.2 Pre-task Planning

Following the reading-while-listening modelling task, learners were split into two breakout rooms on Google Meet. All students received the main writing task instructions. They were all shown a series of pictures from the story and were required to rewrite it by providing as many details as they could remember. Before performing the main task, all students were given 15 minutes planning time. Those in the unguided planning group were invited to rewrite an outline of the crime story without being given any specific instructions on the target language to be used. Those in the guided planning group received the same instructions and had the same planning time but in addition received a grammar bank handout with a series of explanations on how to use the past simple and past continuous to tell a story, including examples of time expressions. The teacher strongly encouraged them to make use of the handout while planning the story. They were also informed that they would not be able to use the grammar bank handout during the main task performance (Motchizuki & Ortega, 2008). Students were required to plan the task in English (L2) and during the planning time students from both groups were not allowed to use any other resources such as the Internet or dictionaries, although due to the online conditions it was not possible to monitor this activity. The teacher and researcher were however able to monitor the

planning time via Google docs and all students used the full 15 minute time period provided. Four students (three from the unguided planning group and one from the guided planning group) asked for extra time but this was not granted. On completion of the planning time, learners submitted their outlines on Google classroom. On account of the distance learning context in which this study took place, learners were only informed that they would not be able to use their notes during the main task after they had submitted their outlines. Students performed the main task during the following lesson and were given 60 minutes to rewrite the story. A week later, all students completed a post-test activity on the use of narrative tenses.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

Two types of instruments were used to collect the main data for this study. The first was a pre- and post-test consisting of 40 cloze questions on the use of narrative tenses (past simple and past continuous). The crime stories produced by the students during the main task were also collected and analysed, but these will form part of another study. The second instrument was a questionnaire consisting of four main questions (3 Likert-scale items and 1 open-ended question) that sought to investigate learners' attitudes to and perceptions of written digital tasks in distance learning. Ethical procedures were conducted in line with the BERA framework (British Educational Research Association) by ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of data. The parents of the school students provided written informed consent and the children assented to their participation.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Pre- and post-test

The pre- and post-tests were administered one week before and one week after the main task. The main aim was to measure students' proficiency in the target language features (narrative tenses). The test was administered using Google Modules, and automatically assessed by the system on the basis of the rules set by the teacher. To ensure the validity of the results, all tests were double-checked by the researcher and the teacher.

Table 2 shows the results of the grammar test, revealing that both groups performed at a similar level in the pre-test, with the unguided planning group performing slightly better than the guided planning group. As confirmed by the data, both groups reached a higher level in the post-test, demonstrating that the written task had had an impact on their knowledge of narrative tenses. The Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed that the data were normally distributed, so the t-tests were conducted to measure between-group differences. The t-test on pre-test scores revealed no significant difference between the groups in the pre-test ($t= 0.710$ $p=0.2492$), indicating that the two groups' overall competence in narrative tenses appeared to be quite balanced. Interestingly, the difference between the groups on the grammar test scores decreased even more in the post-test ($t=-1.269$ $p=0.231$) confirming a similar competence level between the two groups. Additionally, an intra-group analysis of the scores was conducted to reveal any significant differences in scores within each group. The data revealed a significant difference in the performance of the guided planning group between the pre- and post-tests ($t=-3.773$ $p=0.003$).

To summarize, both groups seemed to have started the project with similar competence in the use of narrative tenses in stories. In addition, as measured by the pre- and post-tests, all students had improved their competence in the targeted language features after the intervention. However, a greater improvement was observed in students from the guided planning group.

Table 2. Results and descriptive statistics of the grammar pre- and post-test.

	Unguided planning Pre	Unguided planning Post	Guided planning Pre	Guided planning Post
N students	12	12	12	12
Mean	26.250	30.583	24.167	31.500
SD	6.369	3.579	6.753	4.815

	Unguided planning Pre	Unguided planning Post	Guided planning Pre	Guided planning Post
Shapiro-Wilk	0.936	0.947	0.953	0.963
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	0.452	0.600	0.683	0.828

Note: Maximum possible score 40/40.

4.2 Student questionnaires

The questionnaire included four Likert-scale questions: 3 questions focused on students' perceptions of the modelling and planning task and 1 question asked about their perceived achievements. Results were tabulated and compared using descriptive statistics. Table 3 summarizes the results.

Questions 1, 2 and 3 asked about how the pre-task planning (Q1), the modelling task (Q2) and the technological tools used (Q3) contributed to students' ability to re-write a story using narrative tenses (past simple and continuous). For each of these aspects, students had four options to choose from (0= did not contribute; 1= contributed partially; 2= contributed; 3= contributed significantly).

Table 3. Results for the students' perception questionnaire.

	Group A Planning	Group B Planning	Group A Modelling	Group B Modelling	Group A Digital tools	Group B Digital tools
N students	12	12	12	12	12	12
Mean	2.000	2.083	2.333	2.333	1.917	2.083
SD	0.739	0.669	0.778	0.651	0.793	0.669

As can be seen from the results (Table 3), students' perceptions of the contribution of the three variables planning, modelling and digital tools were very similar. Overall, it appeared that students perceived the modelling task as the most relevant to the development of their ability to re-write a story using narrative tenses. The last Likert-scale question focused on the perceived proficiency in the use of the targeted language structures (past simple and continuous). The question asked to what extent students felt able to use the past simple and continuous correctly. Answers ranged from 0 (objective not reached) to 3 (objective fully reached). Results showed that learners from group A (guided planning) perceived that they fully achieved the language objectives compared to the students from the unguided planning group (10 out of 12 students in group A chose answer 3 – fully reached while only 6 from group B gave the same answer).

The questionnaire also included an open-ended question about students' general perception of the digital writing task. The question was first delivered in Italian and then translated into English for research purposes. Students were asked to use adjectives and short expressions to describe their experiences. From the qualitative analysis of students' answers, most of them seem to have benefited from the writing task on narrative tenses regardless of their group. 75% used positive adjectives to refer to the type of task (e.g. 'enjoyable', 'engaging', 'not dull', 'relaxing').

Moreover, 64% of the students positively evaluated the organization of the task and made explicit reference to time management (e.g. they felt they had been given the correct amount of time to perform the task) and modelling and planning. Students from the guided planning group also mentioned that they found the digital handout very useful in their story-planning. The modelling story and the use of pictures were perceived as the most significant activities to successfully perform the writing task (78% of the students mentioned them). Interestingly, technology was only mentioned as a support tool (e.g., classroom was easy to use; faster writing,

spelling correction). Students appeared to be more focused on the type of tasks than on the technology they were using to perform it.

5. The Impact of the COVID-19 Emergency

The COVID-19 pandemic has been influencing school education in unprecedented ways in Italy and around the world, with many children experiencing disruptions to their school life. Remote forms of online learning present teachers and learners with greater opportunities to develop flexible pedagogical practices. As the findings of this study indicate, pre-task planning is one of the areas that could potentially benefit from online teaching as the more engaged nature of the task approach, and the multimodal and self-paced elements, allowed learners to process the input faster. Furthermore, the affordances offered by the technology fostered language awareness as the digital writing tool enabled students to correct and reorganize the text (and consequently, their ideas) effortlessly. Students felt at ease with the use of the video conferencing tool, particularly when using the breakout rooms.

While the widespread use of video conferencing tools can be innovative for language education, it also presents new challenges for teachers and learners, particularly in school contexts. Video conferencing and digital classrooms are, in fact, just online tools and it is essential that teachers and educators adapt their teaching to use these digital tools effectively. In the last year, re-shaping the way standard EFL classes have been delivered has required significant time for teachers to plan and design their lessons. It is particularly evident in large classes, as is frequently the case in secondary schools, that videoconferencing can be distracting as not all participants are visible at the same time and/or on one screen. Moreover, the way teachers and students communicate in these online environments can lead to significant technical and linguistic challenges. Computer-mediated interactions are filtered through a webcam and an unstable internet connection, can make communication less natura for school age participants. In addition, the move

from face to face presence-based classrooms into personal workspaces has often led to frustration as students usually like to keep their personal life and online presence separated from their school identity. As was the case for participants in this study, having everything in the same space provided a constant opportunity for multitasking, which served to move learners' attention away from the lesson.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 emergency has, in a sense, forced educators and researchers to re-think the higher purpose of online teaching as children, teens and pre-teens cannot be fully responsible for their own learning. Remote learning impacted various areas of the standard learning processes, from time management to communication patterns, so the mere translation of tasks to the online environment was not sufficient. Exploring how tasks can be modified and adapted to online contexts should be the first step towards a technology-mediated curriculum. This, indeed, requires adequate training and commitment from all stakeholders involved in the process of online education, from curriculum designers, to teachers, educators and school principals, as well as managing the expectations of students and their parents and carers.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of pre-task guided planning on learners' knowledge of a target structure (narrative tenses – past simple and past continuous). This chapter has focused on the first part of the study, presenting and discussing the results from the pre- and post-tests together with the student questionnaires. Students' written productions and measures of accuracy, fluency and complexity will be the focus of the second phase of the study. Results showed that technology-mediated tasks seemed to have an influence on students' learning, but it was the task, rather than technology, that guided learning. Thus, confirming results of previous studies (see for example Solares, 2014). A range of opportunities for innovative learning has been

identified. The study demonstrated that carefully designed digital tasks could be successfully implemented in the context of remote education. Moreover, the use of videoconferencing tools (e.g. use of breakout rooms) and a shared digital platform adapted easily to both groups' pre-task work and offered opportunities for multimodality and self-correction. While promising in the context of this study, the urgency that accompanied the wider implementation of distance EFL classes has led to other examples in which language educators have not had the time or expertise to translate tasks into online environments effectively. This still represents one of the major challenges hindering the successful integration of tasks and digital technologies. For this reason, more research is still required on how to design specific training for teachers to help them overcome these challenges and take advantage of the opportunities presented by technology-mediated TBLT curriculum implementation via distance learning.

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